

GEORGE AND PHIL

I can remember one morning when, after breakfast, Thyra and Andy went into New Paltz to purchase a coat for Andy, leaving me with George, (not such a good idea). I wandered into George's studio to find George halfway into one of the storage compartments used for his paintings. Pulling out a rag-covered item, he greeted me with, "Do you shoot?". Never having done that, but always over-confident in my abilities, I replied, "A little", to which George, now rummaging through his desk, replied in his booming voice, grinning from ear to ear, "Great, lets go!" and headed out the door.

Being with George was always a treat, the last trip to new Paltz being no exception, when he taught me to ride a motorcycle, giving me a 5 minute lesson, then saying "Go ahead, have fun" and without a permit, without a license, off I went. But that was George, lots of fun, lots of adventure(I could also tell you about cigar smoking, but that's another time). So I anticipated a good time shooting. Heading down the path, past the garden, he grabbed a coffee can that was hanging on a post and we walked further into the woods, I guess about ¼ mile or so into a narrow clearing. He placed the can down and walked over to a tree further away, pulled a ratty piece of paper out of his jacket pocket(an old Carhart coat I think, tan colored and stained) and hung it on a nail on the tree and then walked back to me and handed the rifle over to me. "You do know how to shoot, right?" he said, with the cigar now in his hand. "Oh sure" I said, and picked up the gun. George stepped over to me and said,"Well, here's a refresher course... it's not a large rifle, a 20 gauge, so you can handle it". He then ran me through some of the basics, with that twinkle in his eyes all the time.

“OK, go ahead, aim and pull”, so I did, and came pretty close to a bulls-eye.

We spent about a ½ hour shooting, with a seemingly endless supply of ammo coming out of his pockets. Finally, he looked at his watch and decided it was time to get back because Thyra and Andy would be getting back, but first, remember the can? He picked up the can and told me to pick up every shell I could find so there wouldn't be any evidence that Thyra could find. That took at least another 15 minutes or so, with George even brushing leaves over where we were standing. Taking down the makeshift target, he handed it to me and said, “souvenir, keep it”. I wish I still had it.

We walked back along the path and when we got to the garden, he emptied the spent shells into his pocked and hung the can back on the post. Stepping back into his studio, he re-wrapped the rifle and stowed it away.